

Course Requirements and Lecture/Reading Schedule
Journalism Principles and Practices

JRN 02205

T and R 10:50 to 12:05, Westby 111
Rowan University
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Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30 to 1:30, Thursday 9:30-10:30, and by appointment

GENERAL INFORMATION

Welcome to your introductory course in journalism – the tee shot for Rowan’s journalism sequence and for your career in a vitally important field. Journalism is the citizen’s window on the nation and the world, and it is the only constitutionally protected private business in the United States.

While this course is a requirement for journalism majors and minors, I believe it will also be valuable for anyone, in any discipline, who wants to become a better consumer of news and information.

Catalog Description

This course introduces students to the world of journalism: the culture, commerce, ethics, history, working conditions, rights, responsibilities, standard practices, and effects of evolving technology. Students learn about the nature of a journalism career and gather information that will serve as a foundation for their future journalism skills as well as for their lecture and seminar courses.

Goals of the Course

1. To examine the role of journalism and media in the cultural and political life of the nation -- how media influence elections, policy, habits, perceptions, and the day-to-day functioning of our lives. Also, to examine the commingling of influence among news, advertising, public relations, and entertainment. The difficulty in evaluating the mixture of media and society is that media are such common parts of our lives that we consciously have to take a step back to observe them. And that's exactly what we will do in this course.

2. To strengthen critical thinking skills as they relate to news, cultivating a perception of why news media operate the way they do -- and, in the process, to become a better-informed media consumer.
3. To develop a continuum of understanding of the relationship of journalism and mass media to society -- how patterns have developed, how current cultural and technological changes affect current discourse, and how developing trends will alter the way we view our culture and ourselves.
4. To connect the dots among various aspects of what we might, for lack of a better term, call “general knowledge” – all those parts of our culture and history that you, as a journalist, will be fitting together for your readers, viewers, and listeners. This involves understanding the flow of current events that makes up the world of news.
5. To develop an understanding of ethics and ethical decision-making, an important skill in a business where you may wield a great deal of power very early in your career.

The Way the Course is Structured

Principles and Practices essentially has four parts:

1. An introduction to the way journalists think, including critical thinking and understanding of current events and the flow of those events in the news cycle.
2. A comprehensive view of the history, development, and current operations of the media on which journalism is carried.
3. In-depth examination of current issues and standards in journalism, including privacy, news standards, effects of media, evolving social media and its impact on the world of journalism, and the relationship between journalism and politics.
4. Forward-looking evaluations of news, the news business, and your career.

READINGS

There are three required books that have been specially prepared for this class and are free. There is also a WordPress site that lists current-events readings for each coming week. The texts and the current events listings are at:

<http://jppcurrentevents.wordpress.com/>

Here are descriptions of the books and the current events site:

1. Carl Hausman, *Principles and Practices of Journalism*. *Principles* looks at journalism and media through the lens of critical thinking, general knowledge, and ethics. It is also heavy on history because a) history is important to understanding how we got to where we are today, and b) journalism is a field very much rooted in its heritage, and you will be at a distinct handicap if you don't have a grasp of that legacy. *Principles* devotes a great deal of space to the workings of various mass media – social, technical, and economic – because news is a part of the environment in which it operates. You can, for example, see many parallels in the technical development of one news medium to the evolution of other media. In addition, the book deals extensively with what a journalist named Walter Lippmann called “the world outside and the pictures in our heads” – meaning, the difference between “reality” and the “reality” we perceive through the media.
2. Carl Hausman, *How to Think About Information*. *How to Think* is a crash course in wading through information, evaluating sources, un-spinning propaganda, putting distortion back in proportion, applying logic to claims, detangling statistics, and developing the journalist’s most valuable tool: a sensitive baloney-detector.
3. Carl Hausman, *The Future of News*. *Future* looks at how the changing digital infrastructure is affecting news economics and content and what models are emerging that might revitalize the industry.
4. <http://jppcurrentevents.wordpress.com/> Check the site late each Thursday. A posting will provide you with between five and ten links to major stories of the week. We will discuss the stories on the following Tuesday’s class, and sometimes on the following Thursday as well.

There is an optional text you may want to pick up in order to get a head start on the next courses in the sequence:

1. Kathryn Quigley, *Introduction to Newswriting: Topics and Techniques*, Kendall-Hunt, 2011. *Introduction to Newswriting* demonstrates newsgathering and writing principles; it will be of particular interest to those who want to pursue a career in newspaper journalism.

A schedule of readings, along with lecture topics, is included at the conclusion of this syllabus.

TESTS, PAPERS, AND PARTICIPATION

Tests

Two. There will be a midterm (10/23) and a final (12/13). The midterm will be worth 15 percent of your grade; the final, 25 percent of your grade. Both the midterm and the final will call for short answers and one or two brief essays. Both tests will cover material from readings, lectures, and current events.

Papers

Two. Each paper is worth 25 percent of your grade. Unless you have a written medical excuse, any late paper will receive no more than a C. Paper #1 is due 10/2. Paper #2 is due 11/27.

Paper #1. In about 1200 words, please critically analyze any news story, feature story or advertisement (political ads are preferred) that you believe, in some way, *does not make sense or misleads the reader/listener/viewer*. There are many approaches you might take. For example, in the first and second class sessions I will describe various political ads (from all sides of the political spectrum) that use real facts and figures in a very misleading way to imply a conclusion totally unwarranted by the data. I will explain the category of the fallacious reasoning that is used; these categories are detailed in *How to Think About Information*.

I will also read some passages from "Loneliness Kills," an article that cited insurance company figures showing that unmarried men typically die at a younger age than do married men, and used those figures to conclude that being single is hazardous to your health. I will point out that the article ignored the fact that single men die in wars at a much higher rate than do married men, and that the insurance company statistics included all males who die -- including children, who could not get married if they wanted to. You may likewise opt to examine news and feature stories for logical inconsistency, such as the above-cited *cause and effect fallacy*.

In your paper, be sure to:

- Fully describe the implied thrust of the advertisement or article.
- Demonstrate how the implied conclusion does not follow from the evidence presented. (Remember: You do not necessarily have to prove the conclusion wrong -- only that it cannot be reasonably drawn from the evidence presented.)
- Identify the specific logical fallacy or misrepresentation.
- Speculate as to why you believe the fallacy or misrepresentation was made. Could it have been accidental? We all make innocently wrong assumptions and connections, especially under deadline pressure. If it

appears deliberate, what might be the specific motives? For instance, don't just write, "to win an election." Dig more deeply; perhaps the intent is to show the opponent weak on crime, or incapable of handling fiscal affairs. Keep digging: Why is crime or finance of such importance that thousands of dollars are being spent to stress this particular point? What underlying factors apply? What past events have pushed "crime" or "financial responsibility" to the forefront?

For **both** papers, note that all sources of information must be cited. Use at least seven different sources for **each** paper, including one interview (counting as one of the seven separate sources) with someone knowledgeable about the subject – someone who would be *recognized as an expert by an editor*. Rowan faculty members are good resources, provided the subject is within their area of expertise. Do not use family members. Use full titles. Provide me with the name and telephone number of the person you interviewed. (Again, to emphasize: you need an interview for *both* papers, and the interviewee must be someone an editor would recognize as an expert.) Do not use Wikipedia or any encyclopedia as a cited reference. You must use reputable sources. Major newspapers and books from good-quality publishers are examples of reputable sources. Just because something is on a website does not mean it is reputable.

For **both** papers: Hand in a paper copy in class on the day it is due and email me a backup (hausman@rowan.edu) before you come to class.

Paper #2: The idea that "history repeats itself" is a cliché, but like many clichés it represents an essentially valid idea. For example: In one of our early lectures we will discuss how ostensibly "objective" reports from the battlefields of World War I were written by the generals themselves in ways carefully calculated for maximum public relations impact. CBS charged General William Westmoreland with masterminding roughly the same scheme during the Vietnam War -- about fifty years later. And then about twenty-five years after that various news organizations accused the Pentagon of orchestrating news coverage of the Iraq war by "embedding" journalists with combat units and manipulating them into telling the story the generals wanted them to see.

Your assignment is to identify an issue in journalism and trace the way it has resurfaced. Use examples from at least three periods in American history, with the final period being the present day or very recent history. Compare the ways in which the issue was reincarnated, and do your best to answer the fundamental question: Did we learn anything from the past when the issue arose again?

Some possible issues are listed below. You are not limited to these; use your imagination.

- Censorship
- News media invasion of privacy
- Pseudo-events in the guise of news (an excellent topic)
- Ethical codes
- Sensationalism in news
- Wartime security versus the need of the public to know about the war
- Media distortion
- Propaganda
- The role of profit in news operations
- Chain ownership and its effect on news

The paper should be about 1600 words and all references must be cited.

Papers will be graded on style and clarity -- and yes, this includes spelling and grammar -- as well as their overall point of view and narrative thrust. A good paper is more than a collection of facts. A good paper links events and ideas and moves toward a general conclusion. Don't just repeat facts...use them to illustrate your basic idea. Always cite the source of your facts within the text of the paper and demonstrate, briefly, why the author or speaker's contribution is important. Just because something is in a book does not indicate that it "proves" anything.

Again, remember that you must be cautious about grammar and usage. Of particular import: A paper with apostrophe errors will automatically be lowered a half grade.

Your final course grade is calculated according to the percentages listed along the description of the assignments. Papers are converted to numerical values this way: A=100; A-=91; B+=88; B=85; B-=81; C+=78; C=75; C-=71; D+=68; D=65; D-=61; F=0. When all assignments are proportionally added up, final grades are determined on these ranges: A=93-100; A-=90-92; B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82; C+=77-79; C=73-76; C-=70-72; D+=67-69; D=63-66; D-=59-62; F=0-59. When the final numerical grade has a decimal from .1 to .4, it is rounded down. For example, 92.4 is an A-. 79.2 is a C+. When the decimal reaches .5 to .9, it is rounded up. 92.5 is an A. 72.8 is a C.

A final note on grading: There is no option for extra credit. Everybody gets the same amount of work and the same chance to perform well. Note too that I realize that some grades may be just a fraction below the cutoff for the next higher grade but I can't manipulate grades as a favor; if decimals are changed capriciously there's no point in having a grading system.

Participation

Attendance is mandatory, as is participation in class discussions. I do realize that all of us encounter various health, transportation, and family problems, so two unexcused absences are allowed. Further absences will affect your grade. I also understand that people have varying degrees of comfort relating to participation in public discussion. It is truly essential that you participate; if you are reluctant, feel you have language difficulties, or experience any other problem meeting this requirement please see me and we will work something out. Class participation is worth 10 percent of your grade.

University Statement on Disabilities: "Your academic success is important. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact upon your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Academic Success Center in order to receive official University services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center can be reached at 856-256-4234. The Center is located on the 3rd floor of Savitz Hall. The staff is available to answer questions regarding accommodations or assist you in your pursuit of accommodations. We look forward to working with you to meet your learning goals."

An important part of your class participation grade is your preparedness to answer questions about readings and current events. It is essential that you keep up with current events readings and be prepared to answer questions in class and contribute to current-events discussions. You need to be able to articulate not only what happened but also why it may have some impact on your life or the lives of those around you.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism is a serious offense. Do not use words, phrases, or ideas without proper attribution. This includes copying content from the Internet. When in doubt, ask if it is ok to use something or how to attribute it accurately. For the university's complete academic honesty policy, see the Rowan University Student Information Guide. The university Web site also features a tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism at <http://www.rowan.edu/library/public/tutorial/honesty.htm>

Essentially, plagiarism means trying to pass someone else's work off as your own. It does not necessarily mean copying an entire paper, although that would clearly be plagiarism. For example, you plagiarize if you:

- Use an interview someone else did or use a quote someone else obtained and don't credit the source.

- Cut and paste a variety of sources and cobble them together without proper citation and with no evident thought on your part as to the thrust of the piece.
- Lift a segment verbatim without citation. A few words here are there are permissible – there are only so many ways to say “Edward R. Murrow died of lung cancer” – but you can’t drop a whole paragraph of somebody else’s work into your piece if you don’t credit it. Just listing the title of a source in a bibliography is not sufficient. You must be very clear about the source of words that are not yours, and cite the source in the text of your paper. You may refer to a works cited page at the end, but there must be a clear indication in the text of the paper about the source of the words.
- Use facts and figures that are not common knowledge without citing the source, creating the impression you gathered the information yourself.
- Try to pass off something you have done for another class as an original work for this class; having said that, I have no objection if you are researching a topic and want to amortize the research (*not* the final paper) between two classes *as long as you speak to me first and clear it with the professor from the other class.*

OTHER UNIVERSITY POLICIES

You can find information on policies such as those governing classroom behavior, academic integrity, student accommodation, laptop computer use the classroom, and university attendance requirements at www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/infoguide/

LECTURE TOPICS AND READINGS

The topics listed are the main subjects for the day. We will sometimes have guest speakers or videos. Note that sometimes the reading may not directly correlate with the lecture; this is because I try to parcel out the readings in manageable chunks and I am assigning pages that will be referred to later in the course.

Readings must be completed by the day they are listed. Be sure to keep current. It is expected that you will attend class regularly, join in discussions, and answer questions based on the reading. Failure to meet these basic responsibilities will affect your participation grade.

About current events readings: Late in the week, usually Thursday afternoon, I will post between five and ten links for current stories at:

<http://jppcurrentevents.wordpress.com/>

Please note that I must reserve the right to make changes in the schedule should circumstances dictate.

Key to readings:

P= Principles and Practices
H= How to Think About Information
F= Future of News

Part One: Thinking Like a Journalist: Understanding Critical Thinking and Current Events

9/4 **Lecture:** Introduction; course requirements.

9/6 **Lecture: How a Skeptic Analyzes Information.** Decoding deception, detecting distortion.
Reading: H, Chapters 1-3
Also, as an exception to the normal routine, have the current events stories read **by today**. Normally you will read the linked-to stories after Thursday and before the following Tuesday. I'll post new stories on Thursday evening.

9/11 **Lecture: Whom Do You Trust?** Evaluating the reliability of sources, eyewitness accounts, documents, and claims.
Reading: H, Chapters 3-6
Video: *Illusions of News*, a PBS documentary on the 1988 U.S. presidential campaign, considered by many to be the most distortion-laden campaign in history – the benchmark for obscuring issues and misleading the electorate.

9/13 **Lecture: What's News?** The news cycle and the nature of current events.
Reading: P, Chapter 1
Screening: *Too Big to Fail*, a film about the major current-events issue we'll be focusing on during the semester – the effect of the world economic collapse.

9/18 **Lecture: Conclusion of *Too Big to Fail*.**
Reading: P, Chapter 2.

Part Two: History, Development, and Current Operations of Journalistic Media

9/20 **Lecture: Freedom of the Press: The Profit and the Price.** An historical overview of the struggle between expression and repression.
Reading: P, Chapter 3

9/25 **Lecture: Books and Publishing --The Permanent Press.** History of book publishing, the impact of this medium on the news, and the current state of the industry.
Reading: P, Chapter 4
Also, this web link: http://www.usatoday.com/life/books/news/2004-10-03-moore-coulter_x.htm

9/27 **Lecture: The Newspaper Industry.** An overview of the history of newspapers, how they evolved, and how they function today.
Reading: P, Chapter 5
Screening: *All the President's Men*, perhaps the greatest film about newspapers ever made, portraying the conflict between the government's desire for secrecy and the public's right to know. The film is also a first-class primer on reporting technique.

10/2 **Lecture: *All the President's Men*, continued**
Reading: TBA
*****PAPER #1 DUE TODAY**

10/4 **Lecture: Conclusion, *All the President's Men*.**
Reading: TBA

10/9 **Lecture: How Magazines Have Cornered the Market on Cornering the Market.** Discussion of how magazines have evolved from general-interest publications to narrowly targeted media.
Reading: P, Chapter 6

10/11 **Lecture: Radio and Television.** History and development of radio, with an examination of the birth of electronic journalism and the evolution of highly targeted media. The way TV works; emerging TV technologies, and the revolution of news brought about by “wires and lights in a box.”
Reading: P, Chapter 7 and 8

10/16 **Lecture: TV News – Public Service or Profit Center?**
Screening: *Good Night and Good Luck*
Reading: No reading due today

10/18 **Lecture: Conclusion, *Good Night and Good Luck***
Reading: No reading due today

10/23 ***MIDTERM

10/25 **Lecture: The Engine the Drives the Mass Media -- How Advertising Works.** An introduction to advertising history, content, agency practice, and problems with the commingling of advertising and news. Particular emphasis on advertising in U.S. presidential campaigns from 1960 to the present – and how that advertising affected the news.
Reading: P, Chapter 10; F, chapters 3 and 4

10/30 **Lecture: Public Relations and the Mirror Makers.** How PR works, the elusive definition of public relations, and the relationship of news to PR
Reading: P, Chapter 11

Part Three: Issues in Journalism

11/1 **Lecture: The Values of Journalism.** An examination of the concepts of truth and fairness.
Reading: TBA

11/8 **Lecture: Laws and Regulations.** How regulation has shaped journalism and vice-versa. What the Constitution and the Supreme Court say about free speech and press.
Reading: P, Chapter 12

11/13 **Lecture: Ethics.** The meaning of ethics; relating philosophy to journalism and why this isn't necessarily boring.
Reading: P, Chapter 13

11/15 **Lecture: Privacy, the Press and the Public.** A discussion of the right to privacy versus the presumed right to know; legal and philosophical bases of privacy.
Reading: TBA

11/20 **Research About Journalism and the Media.** An examination of media theory and effects; the impact and consequences of mass communication.
Reading: P, Chapter 14

Part Four: The Future of News

11/27 **Lecture: The Internet and Converging Media.** How digital technology is changing everything.
Reading: P, Chapter 9 and 14; F, chapters 1 and 2
Screening: *The Facebook Obsession*, a documentary about the rise of social media and some of the related impacts of the technology.
*****PAPER 2 DUE**

11/29 **Lecture: The New Economics of News, Part I.** Social media and effects on the news business.
Reading: F, chapters 5, 6, and 7
Conclusion: *The Facebook Obsession*

12/4 **Lecture: The New Economics of News, Part 2**
Reading: F, chapters 7, 8, 9, 10
Screening: *Page One*, a documentary about The New York Times and how the paper is attempting to refocus in a digital era.

12/6 **Lecture: The Future of News**
Conclusion: *Page One*.
Reading: F, chapters 11, 12, and 13.

12/11 **Lecture:** Review for Final
Reading: No reading assignment

12/13 * FINAL**

The final will be reviewed and discussed during the appropriate period during finals week. The final exam periods are not announced until mid-semester; pay attention to Banner and your email for notification.

Last Page of Syllabus

7/25/12